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PRESS RELEASE

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District Woman Pleads Guilty to Social Security Fraud - Admits Providing False Information and Stealing Checks Intended for Her Son -

WASHINGTON - Janet Bethea, 50, of Washington, D.C., has pled guilty to a charge of defrauding the Social Security Administration in order to receive more than \$66,000 in disability benefits to which she was not entitled, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced today.

Bethea pled guilty on July 29, 2011 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to a charge of felony Social Security fraud. The Honorable James E. Boasberg scheduled sentencing for October 19, 2011. The charge carries a statutory penalty of up to five years in prison, and a fine of up to \$250,000. As part of the guilty plea, Bethea has agreed to pay full restitution to the federal government.

According to a statement of offense submitted to the Court, Bethea applied for Social Security disability benefits on behalf of her son, and sought to be appointed as a "representative payee." In the application, she falsely represented that her son, who was over 18, had a disabling condition that rendered him unable to work or to receive benefits directly. At the time, her son was employed by a government agency and was ineligible to receive disability benefits. Even after her son moved out of the household several years later, Bethea continued to falsely represent to the Social Security Administration that he was still living in her home, and that the Social Security benefits she received were being spent solely for his care.

Bethea's false representations caused the agency to make overpayments of benefits in the amount of \$66,672 between August 2002 and October 2008. Bethea used the money she received to pay for her own expenses, including housing and utilities.

In announcing the guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen praised the efforts of Special Agent Adrienne Messer of the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, who investigated the case. He also acknowledged the assistance of former Assistant U.S. Attorney John Griffith and Assistant U.S. Attorney Allison Barlotta, who prosecuted the case.